

Congratulations to the Winners of the Teen Writing Challenge

Grades 6—8

Honorable Mention—Cameron Smith

A Murky Tale

“Follow me. This story calls for a proper setting,” Oakley called out, leading his friends, Ian and Brodie, toward the old pier. The moonless Hallows' Eve was gloomy, the fog so thick you could almost skip a rock on it. The boys tread gingerly down the length of the rickety wooden pier that had jutted into the lake for generations. Plopping down on the edge, they dangled their feet towards the undisturbed, black water.

“Legend has it that a gruesome lake creature rises up every moonless Halloween to pull unsuspecting people down into the depths of the cold, dark lake,” Oakley said. “On October 31, 1954, on this very pier, 14-year-old Howdy Sink went out to fish in the middle of the night and was never seen again. Newspapers claimed Sink ran away from home. I think you know what really happened,” Oakley continued, his cursory glance implying some gigantic, fanged monster had snatched Howdy, pulled him to the bottom of the lake, and eaten him whole.

“This is lame!” Brodie brusquely declared. “None of this really happened and you know it. I’m outta here.”

“Come on, chicken!” Oakley called after Brodie who, after just a few long strides, disappeared into the fog.

“Forget him,” Oakley dismissed. “So, the next victim was Shelby Gone. She went missing on October 31, 1984, a stormy night. She was sitting right here with her friend under the turbulent skies. There was a booming crack of thunder and a bright flash of lightning. When her friend looked over,” Oakley murmured, his voice trailing off, “Shelby was no longer there.”

Oakley paused the story briefly, intentionally evoking Ian’s fear, only a slight ripple of water underneath the pier disrupting the night.

“Well, I guess we should head back ho.” Oakley’s words were cut short suddenly as both boys felt a wet hand grab their ankles and forcefully yank them down into the murky water below. As they thrashed about, instilled with terror and surmising their certain death, they both heard a quiet cackling that sounded all too familiar...in fact, it sounded exactly like Brodie. Realizing the mythical lake creature preparing to devour them was a sopping wet Brodie standing in the water beneath the pier, the boys began to pummel Brodie playfully. Their spontaneous laughter that reverberated across the lake was loud enough to wake the spirits.

Clad in their sopping clothes, Oakley and Ian waded to shore with Brodie in tow, recalling how good of a scare it was and how, for just a fleeting moment, they had believed the legend of the lake creature was true.

“This will go down as our best Halloween ever,” Oakley bragged.

“No doubt,” Ian replied. “Don’t you think so, Brodie? Brodie?”

Oakley and Ian turned to face their friend. All that they saw were the concentric ripples emanating from where Brodie had stood in the otherwise placid lake.

Two things never happened again. Oakley never told another scary story, and Brodie, well, Brodie was never seen.

